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SUBJECT: NEED TO GET IMET PROGRAM BACK ON TRACK

11. (U) This cable contains an action request -- see para 8.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Embassy needs help urgently in getting our IMET program back on track. Nothing is more important to our long-term relationship in Pakistan than contact with mid-grade Pakistani military officers. We have lost 39 students for 60 courses and half our IMET budget because of the hiatus in funding. This marks the second year that excessive delays have caused such problems. We understand that the FY 07 funds and authority are now expected to arrive the week of August 6, over one month after the President signed the coup waiver. We request that steps be put in place now to prevent this from happening next year. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) Embassy needs assistance from Washington agencies in getting our IMET program back on track. We have lost space for 39 students in 60 courses. We were not allowed to spend IMET money after March 31 because of the coup waiver, the notification, and a series of other issues resulting in delays. As a result, we have lost IMET opportunities totaling about \$756,000. We can recover and reprogram some of the lost training opportunities, but not for courses offered only once a year. We are actively exploring options and have programmed approximately \$361,000 in IMET training -- but these courses depend on seat availability. Although we are grateful that DoD managed to find other funding for two Pakistani brigadiers to attend Senior Service Colleges, no Pakistani mid-grade officers are now attending courses in the US.

14. (SBU) The courses in which we have lost spaces run the gamut from ordnance basic officer to fuels apprentice to animal care specialist and veterinary food inspection. In other words, these courses would have reached a broad group of Pakistani military personnel, and the training responds to the range of skills needed in a modern military force. This is not a country in which we can simply plug an officer into the next available course: the selection process and obtaining visas require forward planning.

15. (SBU) Of the billions we are spending here, nothing is more important than the IMET program to our long-term relationship with Pakistan. We lost an opportunity to train Pakistan military personnel during the sanctions years and as a result an entire generation of military officers (lieutenants through brigadiers) has had little contact with US Armed Forces. As in most countries, a better trained and more efficient military will experience fewer casualties, cause less collateral damage to civilians, and have more success against terrorists.

16. (SBU) But more critically, in the case of Pakistan, the US needs to engage with these mid-level officers whom we have had no contact with for twelve years. There has been a consistent drumbeat in the American press that these mid-level Pakistani officers are more Islamic in their outlook than their superiors. We do not know if

this claim is true, and we do not believe the press does, either. But the best way to find out and to counter these tendencies, if they exist, is to have regular American contact with them. Realistically, the Pakistan armed forces will play a major role in this society for decades to come. And, to state the obvious, an officer with US training will develop friendships with his fellow students, both American and third country, and will better understand American values and our open society, which will be useful in times of crisis.

¶7. (SBU) We understand the President signed the "coup waiver" June 29 and then a decision was made to renotify this widely supported program. The notification went forward a month later.

¶8. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: We urge that procedures be put in place now to prevent this same chain of events from taking place next year. The second notification was a new element in implementation of the program this year. We believe that members and staffers share our highly favorable view of the IMET program and want it to be implemented smoothly. We would urge Washington agencies to reach out to relevant staffers and ask if we can proceed to implement the program while the notification is either in process and/or pending. END ACTION REQUEST.

PATTERSON